



On My Way PreK

**October 2017
Report**



Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning



Introduction

The Office of Early Childhood and Out of School Learning (OECOSL), under the direction of the Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA), works alongside its partners in administering the State of Indiana's preschool pilot program, On My Way Pre-K. On My Way Pre-K awards grants to 4-year-olds from low-income families, so they may have access to high-quality Pre-K programs the year before they begin kindergarten. Eligible families may use the grant at any approved On My Way Pre-K program. Approved programs may be located in a public or private school, licensed child care center, licensed home, or registered ministry, as long as that program meets the quality requirements and is registered as an On My Way Pre-K provider. Families may choose from a program that is full or part-day, as well as from programs that end with the school year or continue through the summer.

Longitudinal Study

OECOSL, in partnership with Purdue University, has concluded the second year of a 4-year longitudinal study of the On My Way Pre-K program. This annual report summarizes the study's implementation approach and program progress. While two full years of the study remain, the information presented here continues to provide valuable feedback about the On My Way Pre-K program.

The longitudinal evaluation is attempting to answer three main questions:

1. Does participation in On My Way Pre-K result in improved school readiness and better early school performance?
2. What is the rate of growth of children's early academic skills, from fall to spring of pre-K and fall to spring of Kindergarten?
3. What is the quality of On My Way Pre-K classrooms?

Participation in the evaluation study was voluntary on the part of the child, family, and provider.

Cohort 1

The original sample (cohort 1) for the child outcome evaluation study comprised a total of 381 randomly-selected 4-year-old children located in 56 randomly-selected child care programs; however, 10 children were removed from the original sample due to issues with parental consent. Thus, for cohort 1, the final sample size is 371 children.

In the fall of 2015, 276 of the selected children were attending On My Way Pre-K in the fall of 2015. A comparison group of 95 children was selected from the CCDF voucher program. These children were attending a CCDF-approved center-based program that was either not participating in Paths to Quality ("Level 0") or was rated at the lowest quality level in Paths to Quality ("Level 1").



Cohort 2

In the fall of 2016, a second cohort (cohort 2) of children was recruited, comprised of 187 randomly-selected 4-year-old children located in 40 randomly-selected child care programs. One hundred of the selected children were attending On My Way Pre-K. Similar to cohort 1, a comparison group of 87 children was selected from the CCDF voucher program attending a CCDF-approved center-based program that was either not participating in Paths to Quality (“Level 0”) or was rated at the lowest quality level in Paths to Quality (“Level 1”).

Results from child outcome and quality assessments:

- Children participating in On My Way Pre-K generally entered their programs in the fall with lower skill levels than their like peers on several different school readiness skills.
- Evidence shows that children from both cohorts participating in On My Way Pre-K gained skills from fall to spring of prekindergarten at a higher rate than their peers. These gains included several key aspects of school readiness: language comprehension, early literacy, and a broad measure of school readiness that assesses children’s knowledge of colors, letters, numbers/counting, size/comparison, and shapes. The differences in gains between groups in these specific skills were statistically significant.
- Early evidence from cohort 1 indicates that significant gains experienced by children participating in On My Way Pre-K were maintained over the summer and into kindergarten. Further, in the case of one measure of early literacy skills (i.e., letter-word identification), although no initial significant differences in gains were seen across the groups during the prekindergarten year, by the end of kindergarten, the On My Way Pre-K group had grown significantly more than their peers (indicating potential “sleeper effects”).
- In terms of classroom quality using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) observational tool, results indicate that children participating in On My Way Pre-K experienced significantly higher levels of Emotional Support and Instructional Support compared to children in the comparison group.

Results from family survey data:

During the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years, a total of 308 parents with children attending On My Way Pre-K were given surveys. Key findings of the parent surveys are summarized below:

- Fifty-six percent of children attending On My Way Pre-K had not attended any child care or preschool in the prior year.
- Thirty-five percent of parents said, if they had not enrolled their child into On My Way Pre-K, their child would have remained at home and not attended any other child care or preschool.



- Ninety-one percent of parents reported being “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their child’s On My Way Pre-K program.
- When parents were asked “Has having your child in On My Way Pre-K helped you _____,” their responses included:
 - 43 percent responded that they had increased work or school hours.
 - 29 percent responded that they had been able to obtain new employment.
 - 23 percent responded that they were able to begin school or job training.
 - 53 percent reported that the program had helped them in other ways, including: searching for a new job, keeping a current job, or obtaining better shifts at work.

Summary

Overall, the feedback and research conducted thus far is consistent with the conclusion that On My Way Pre-K has the potential to improve lower income 4-year-olds’ early learning skills and readiness for kindergarten, especially in language comprehension, early literacy skills, and classroom behavior.

OECOSL, in partnership with Purdue University, will continue this longitudinal study and is eager to share other emerging trends and areas for improvement throughout the course of the study. FSSA appreciates the participation of those providers and families in the program who have assisted the agency in learning more about the services being provided. If there are any questions regarding the On My Way Pre-K program, please contact Nicole Norvell via email at Nicole.Norvell@fssa.in.gov.